

**In the Claims:**

Please amend the claims as follows (the changes in these claims are shown with ~~striketrough~~ for deleted matter and underlines for added matter). A complete listing of the claims with proper claim identifiers is set forth below.

1. (Original) Nonwoven layer for a filter, in particular, for a vacuum cleaner bag, characterized in that at least one region of the nonwoven layer, the region having a predetermined thickness and a predetermined area, has an average pore size smaller than 50  $\mu\text{m}$  and comprises fibers being bonded together such that a movement of the fibers relative to each other in a direction parallel to ~~the~~ a surface of the layer is inhibited.

2. (Currently Amended) Nonwoven layer according to claim 1, wherein the nonwoven layer is an airlaid ~~and/or~~ and carded nonwoven layer, an airlaid nonwoven layer, a carded nonwoven layer, a spunbond or spunlace nonwoven layer, or a meltblown nonwoven layer.

3. (Original) Nonwoven layer according to claim 2, having a basis weight between 10 and 100  $\text{g/m}^2$  and wherein the spunbond fibers have an average fineness of 0.6 -12 denier, the meltblown fibers have an average diameter of 1 $\mu\text{m}$  - 15 $\mu\text{m}$ , and the carded fibers have an average fineness of 1 - 16.7 denier.

4. (Currently Amended) Nonwoven layer according to ~~one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the at least one region comprises an adhesive.

5. (Currently Amended) Nonwoven layer according to claim 4, wherein the adhesive is a hotmelt, a cold glue, a dry-bond adhesive, ~~and/or~~ a thermoplastic polymer, or mixtures thereof ~~preferably a pulverized polymer~~.

6. (Original) Nonwoven layer according to claim 5, wherein the amount of hotmelt is between 1 and 10  $\text{g/m}^2$ .

7. (Currently Amended) Nonwoven layer according to ~~one of the claims 1-3~~ claim 1, wherein the at least one region is a hot calendered region.

8. (Currently Amended) Composite layer for a filter, in particular, for a vacuum cleaner bag, comprising:

a first nonwoven layer ~~according to one of the claims 1-6~~ wherein at least one region of the nonwoven layer, the region having a predetermined thickness and a predetermined area, has an average pore size smaller than 50  $\mu$ m, and

a second nonwoven layer on top of the first nonwoven layer,

wherein an adhesive is located at an interface between the first and second nonwoven layer such that fibers of the first ~~and/or~~ or the second nonwoven layer or the first and the second nonwoven layer are bonded together and a movement of the bonded fibers in ~~the first and/or second nonwoven layer~~ relative to each other in a direction parallel to the a surface of the first layer is inhibited.

9. (Original) Composite layer according to claim 8, wherein the first or second nonwoven layer is a spunbond nonwoven layer, the other nonwoven layer is a meltblown nonwoven layer, and the adhesive is a hotmelt.

10. (Currently Amended) Method for producing a nonwoven layer ~~according to one of the claims 1-7~~ wherein at least one region of the nonwoven layer, the region having a predetermined thickness and a predetermined area, has an average pore size smaller than 50  $\mu$ m and comprises fibers being bonded together such that a movement of the fibers relative to each other in a direction parallel to a surface of the layer is inhibited, the method comprising the step of:

treating at least one region of the nonwoven layer, the region having a predetermined thickness and a predetermined area, such that the nonwoven layer has an average pore size smaller than 50  $\mu$ m and such that the fibers are bonded together and a movement of the fibers relative to each other in a direction parallel to the surface of the layer is inhibited.

11. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 10, wherein the treating step comprises the steps of:

spraying of hotmelt, cold glue, dry-bond adhesive, ~~and/or~~ thermoplastic polymer,  
or mixtures thereof preferably pulverized polymer, and  
applying pressure to obtain a bonding of the fibers.

12. (Original) Method according to claim 10, wherein the treating step comprises the step of hot calendering.

13. (Currently Amended) Method for producing a composite layer according to claim 8 ~~or 9~~, comprising the steps of:  
providing a first nonwoven layer,  
applying an adhesive to the first nonwoven layer, and  
providing a second nonwoven layer,  
wherein an adhesive is located at an interface between the first and second nonwoven layer such that fibers of the first ~~and/or~~ or the second nonwoven layer or the first and the second nonwoven layer are bonded together and a movement of the fibers in the first ~~and/or~~ or second nonwoven layer or the first and the second nonwoven layer relative to each other in a direction parallel to the surface of the layer is inhibited.

14. (Original) Method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of applying pressure to obtain a bonding of the fibers.

15. (Original) Filter medium, in particular, for a vacuum cleaner bag, comprising a filter structure characterized in that a surface or an interface of the filter structure is provided with a filter paper layer having a smaller surface area than the filter structure.

16. (Original) Filter medium according to claim 15, wherein the filter paper layer is bonded to the filter structure.

17. (Currently Amended) Filter medium according to claim 16, wherein the filter paper layer is bonded using an adhesive ~~such as~~ wherein the adhesive is a hotmelt, a cold glue, a dry-bond adhesive, ~~and/or~~ a thermoplastic polymer or mixtures thereof.

18. (Currently Amended) Filter medium according to claim 16 ~~or 17~~, wherein the filter paper layer is bonded to the filter structure at discrete region.
19. (Currently Amended) Filter medium according to ~~one of the claim 15-18~~ claim 15, wherein the filter structure comprises a nonwoven layer.
20. (Currently Amended) Filter medium according to one of the ~~claims 15-19~~ claim 15, wherein the filter structure comprises successively a spunbond, an air-laid, a spunbond, a melt-blown, and a spunbond layer.
21. (Currently Amended) Filter medium according to ~~one of the claim 15-20~~ claim 15, wherein the filter paper layer has an air permeability of at least about  $250 \text{ l/m}^2/\text{s}$ , ~~preferably of at least about  $500 \text{ l/m}^2/\text{s}$ , most preferred of at least about  $600 \text{ l/m}^2/\text{s}$ .~~
22. (Currently Amended) Vacuum cleaner bag comprising a filter medium, ~~according to one claims 15-24~~ the filter medium comprising a filter structure wherein a surface or an interface of the filter structure is provided with a filter paper layer having a smaller surface area than the filter structure.
23. (Original) Vacuum cleaner bag according to claim 22, wherein the filter paper layer is provided at a region of a surface of the filter structure such that, in operation, the region is exposed directly to an airflow entering the bag.
24. (Currently Amended) Vacuum cleaner bag according to claim 22 ~~or 23~~ comprising two portions of filter medium wherein both portions are bonded together at an outer edge and wherein the first portion comprises an air inlet and the second portion comprises the filter paper layer at a region opposite to the air inlet.
25. (Original) Vacuum cleaner bag according to claim 24, wherein the filter paper layer is provided at the inner surface or the outer surface of the bag.
26. (New) Nonwoven layer according to claim 4 wherein the adhesive is a pulverized polymer.

27. (New) The method according to claim 11 wherein the polymer comprises a pulverized polymer.

28. (New) Filter medium according to claim 15, wherein the filter paper layer has an air permeability of at least about 500 l/m<sup>2</sup>/s.

29. (New) Filter medium according to claim 15, wherein the filter paper layer has an air permeability of at least about 600 l/m<sup>2</sup>/s.